

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL BELFAST

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TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: TORIES RETAIN TWO SEATS IN BY-ELECTIONS

REF: LONDON 3380

SUMMARY: IN TWO BY-ELECTIONS MARCH 11. CONSERVATIVES
SCORED NOTEWORTHY VICTORIES IN RETAINING CARSHALTON
AND THE WIRRAL. IN BOTH CONSTITUENCIES TURN-OUT WAS
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CONSIDERABLY LESS THAN IN OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTION, WITH

CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES RETAINING LARGE SHARE OF PREVIOUS VOTES. LABOR VOTE SLUMPED BADLY IN BOTH SEATS AS DID LIBERAL VOTE WITH LIBERALS LOSING DEPOSIT IN THE WIRRAL. END SUMMARY

1. ELECTIONS WERE HELD IN TWO CONSTITUENCIES MARCH 11 TO FILL VACANCIES CREATED BY ELEVATION OF CONSERVATIVE INCUMBENTS TO HOUSE OF LORDS. VOTER TURN-OUT WAS CONSIDERABLY SMALLER THAN THAT IN OCTOBER 1974 GENERAL ELECTION WITH 60.6 PERCENT OF ELECTORATE IN CARSHALTON AND 55.6 PERCENT IN THE WIRRAL.

2. CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES WON BOTH SEATS HANDSOMELY, INCREASING CONSERVATIVE MAJORITY IN CARSHALTON FROM 3,698 TO 9,732. IN THE WIRRAL, CONSERVATIVE MAJORITY INCREASED FROM 13,488 TO 24,112.

3. STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF RESULTS SUGGEST A CONSERVATIVE SWING OF 8.4 FROM LABOR IN CARSHALTON AND OF SOMEWHAT LARGER FIGURE IN THE WIRRAL. (ACCORDING CONSERVATIVE PARTY CHAIRMAN LORD THORNEYCROFT, CONSERVATIVE SWING IN THE WIRRAL WAS OVER 13 PERCENT.) HOWEVER, SWING ANALYSIS PERHAPS NOT A SIGNIFICANT WAY OF ASSESSING RESULTS IN VIEW OF LOW PARTICIPATION WHICH HURT LABOR BADLY. WHAT IS PERHAPS MORE SIGNIFICANT IS FACT THAT RELATIVELY UNKNOWN, YOUNG CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATES WERE ABLE IN BOTH CONSTITUENCIES TO RETAIN SIGNIFICANT CONSERVATIVE VOTE IN REPLACING SENIOR AND HIGHLY-RESPECTED TORY LEADERS, LORD CARR IN CARSHALTON AND LORD SELWYN-LLOYD IN THE WIRRAL.

4. TROUBLES OF THE LIBERAL PARTY WERE ONLY INCREASED WITH PARTY LOSING ELECTION DEPOSIT IN THE WIRRAL FOLLOWING LOSS IN COVENTRY (REFTEL). LIBERAL LOSSES SUGGEST THAT QUESTION OF PARTY LEADERSHIP WILL NOW BE ATTACKED MORE INTENSIVELY SINCE LIBERALS HAVE TRADITIONALLY DONE WELL IN BOTH THESE CONSTITUENCIES.

5. LABOR RETENTION OF SEAT IN COVENTRY AND TORY RETENTION IN CARSHALTON AND THE WIRRAL DOES LITTLE TO AFFECT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THE MATHEMATICS OF PARTY STRENGTHS IN HOUSE OF COMMONS. STRENGTH OF CONSERVATIVE SHOWING, HOWEVER, HAS BUOYED PARTY'S ESPRIT AND VICTORY WILL REDOUND TO CREDIT OF MRS. THATCHER AND HER POLICY OF PARTICIPATING ACTIVELY IN BY-ELECTIONS. (CARSHALTON VICTOR, NIGEL FORMAN, IS INTIMATELY ASSOCIATED WITH MRS. THATCHER AS LEADER, HAVING BRIEFED HER FREQUENTLY AS FOREIGN POLICY ADVISOR WHILE HE WAS IN CONSERVATIVE RESEARCH DEPARTMENT.)

6. CONSERVATIVE SHOWINGS IN BY-ELECTIONS, WHEN PRO-
JECTED ON NATIONAL LEVEL, INDICATE THAT CONSERVATIVES
WOULD WIN CONVINCINGLY IF GENERAL ELECTION WERE CALLED
NOW. THIS IS THE ONE GOOD REASON WHY THERE IS NO PROS-
PECT FOR AN IMMEDIATE GENERAL ELECTION AND WHY THE WILSON
GOVERNMENT WILL BE ABLE TO RESTRAIN ITS OWN LEFT-WING
FOR THE TIME BEING (SEE SEPTEL ON VOTE OF CONFIDENCE).

ARMSTRONG

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